

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1277

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update the Lethal Means Safety and Suicide Prevention training course of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 21, 2021

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. SANDERS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update the Lethal Means Safety and Suicide Prevention training course of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Lethal Means Safety
5 Training Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SUICIDE RISK MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION**

7 **AND LETHAL MEANS TRAINING.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—

1 (1) INITIAL UPDATE.—Not later than 180 days
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
3 retary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with indi-
4 viduals and entities described in subsection (c), shall
5 update the Lethal Means Safety and Suicide Preven-
6 tion training course of the Department of Veterans
7 Affairs to ensure that it is culturally appropriate
8 and uses best practices identified by appropriate
9 subject matter experts.

10 (2) SUBSEQUENT UPDATES.—Not less fre-
11 quently than once each year, the Secretary shall up-
12 date the training course described in paragraph (1)
13 as appropriate, taking into consideration best prac-
14 tices, and publish a report on the internet website of
15 the Department that includes the percentage of indi-
16 viduals in each category described in paragraphs (2),
17 (3), and (4) of subsection (b) who completed such
18 training during the year covered by the report.

19 (b) TRAINING.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall require
21 each employee described in paragraph (2) to take
22 the most recently updated version of the training
23 course described in subsection (a)(1)—

1 (A) not later than 90 days after the date
2 such employee is initially hired by the Depart-
3 ment; and

4 (B) at least once every year thereafter.

5 (2) COVERED EMPLOYEE.—An employee de-
6 scribed in this paragraph is any of the following:

7 (A) An employee of the Veterans Health
8 Administration or Veterans Benefits Adminis-
9 tration who regularly interacts with veterans in
10 the course of performing the responsibilities of
11 the employee.

12 (B) A compensation and pension examiner,
13 including an employee of a contractor of the
14 Department who performs compensation and
15 pension examinations.

16 (C) An employee of a Vet Center or voca-
17 tional rehabilitation facility.

18 (3) COMMUNITY CARE PROVIDERS.—As a condi-
19 tion of furnishing care through a non-Department
20 provider under section 1703 of title 38, United
21 States Code, the Secretary shall require any em-
22 ployee of such provider who provides such care to
23 take the most recently updated version of the train-
24 ing course described in subsection (a)(1)—

1 (A) not later than 90 days after the date
2 on which the Secretary first agrees to furnish
3 any such care through such provider; and

4 (B) at least once every year thereafter.

5 (4) CAREGIVERS.—As a condition of providing
6 support to a caregiver under section 1720G of title
7 38, United States Code, the Secretary shall require
8 the caregiver to take the most recently updated
9 version of the training course described in subsection
10 (a)—

11 (A) not later than 90 days after the date
12 on which the caregiver first receives support
13 under such section; and

14 (B) at least once every year thereafter.

15 (c) INDIVIDUALS AND ENTITIES DESCRIBED.—The
16 individuals and entities described in this subsection are
17 the following:

18 (1) The Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
19 ices, in consultation with the Director of the Na-
20 tional Institute of Mental Health, the Administrator
21 of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
22 Administration, and the heads of such other Federal
23 agencies as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs con-
24 siders appropriate.

1 (2) Experts in the assessment, treatment, and
2 management of individuals at risk for suicide.

3 (3) Such professional associations as the Sec-
4 retary of Veterans Affairs considers appropriate.

5 (4) Federal firearms license dealers and in-
6 structors.

7 (5) Experts in lethal means safety counseling
8 practice and education.

9 (6) Mental Illness Research, Education, and
10 Clinical Centers of the Department of Veterans Af-
11 fairs.

12 (7) Veterans service organizations.

13 (d) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary shall
14 make the training course described in subsection (a) pub-
15 licly available on an internet website of the Department.

16 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

17 (1) VET CENTER.—The term “Vet Center” has
18 the meaning given that term in section 1712A(h) of
19 title 38, United States Code.

20 (2) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The
21 term “veterans service organization” means an orga-
22 nization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Af-
23 fairs for the representation of veterans under section
24 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

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